



Orientation Meeting Three

Cross-cultural Communication

Background

Below are some guidelines to follow when communicating with others in a foreign country.

Learn Local Words

- Whenever possible, try to speak the local language. At a minimum, learn to say hello, goodbye, please, thank you, and you're welcome.
- It is important to learn the local word for "bathroom". If you just ask for the "bathroom" as you would in America, you may be led to a room with a bathtub, wash basin, or shower, but not a toilet.

Communicate Clearly

- Be specific and keep your language simple. Avoid slang words and contractions.
- Speak slowly, but not loudly! As people slow their language they tend to raise their volume.
- Remember that humor does not always translate into other cultures. Avoid telling jokes, especially ethnic ones.

Questions about the United States

If you are asked uncomfortable questions about the United States (political, human rights, current events, etc.), follow these simple rules:

1. Listen carefully to make sure you understand the question. Analyze the content of the question. Pause and think.
2. Sort out any over-generalizations and establish a thoughtful response. Respond only to relevant issues.
3. It is alright to disagree, to admit that you do not understand an issue, or to decline to discuss something that you find uncomfortable.
4. Do not feel as though you have to defend every decision made by the government or private industry in the United States.